DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 186 CG 029 977

AUTHOR Sugimura, Kazumi
TITLE Identity Exploration and Relatedness among Japanese Female Late Adolescents.
PUB DATE 2000-03-00
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence (8th, Chicago, IL, March 30-April 2, 2000).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Females; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Japanese Culture; Self Actualization; Undergraduate Students
IDENTIFIERS *Identity Formation

ABSTRACT

Identity researchers are beginning to realize that identity in collectivist cultures is more deeply embedded in relational contexts than is identity in individualistic cultures. However, little is known about the ways in which adolescents use relationships in identity formation in collectivist cultures. Moreover, it is assumed that there are differing styles of relatedness in identity formation across collectivist cultures. Particularly in Japanese culture, individuals are expected from childhood to recognize and attune themselves to the others' expectations. That is, the direct assertion of personal needs is viewed as expressing an immature self. In this study 33 Japanese female university students were interviewed. Results show that participants did work on identity issues, and thus the Western concept and approaches to identity formation can generally apply to them. However, the process of identity exploration among Japanese female late adolescents, in particular the process of balancing their own and others perspectives, is different from that of Western adolescents. This study provides empirical evidence on how they construct their sense of self in relational contexts. Further studies comparing Japanese with Western adolescents are needed on the identity exploration process, which will help to construct a theory of identity development from a viewpoint of relatedness. (MKA)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 441 186

Identity exploration and relatedness among Japanese female late adolescents

Kazumi Sugimura

Otemon Gakuin University, Osaka, Japan

Paper presented as part of symposium entitled "Identity formation in non-Western cultural contexts" (Chair: Jean S. Phinney) at the Eighth Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Chicago, IL, March 30 – April 2, 2000.

Author's address: Department of Psychology, Otemon Gakuin University, 2-1-15 Nishiai, Ibaraki-city, Osaka 567-8502, Japan.

Phone: +81-726-41-9566, Fax: +81-726-43-9432

E-mail: kazumi.sugimura@nifty.ne.jp

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CG 029977

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

K. SUGIMURA

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Introduction

Identity researchers are beginning to recognize that identity in collectivist cultures is more deeply embedded in relational contexts than is identity in individualistic cultures. However, little is known about the ways in which adolescents use relationships in identity formation in collectivist cultures. Moreover, it is assumed that there are differing styles of relatedness in identity formation across collectivist cultures. Particularly in Japanese culture, individuals are expected from childhood to recognize and attune themselves to the others' expectations (Shweder et al., 1998). That is, the direct assertion of personal needs is viewed as expressing an immature self.

From a relational viewpoint, identity formation can be described as the process of internalizing expectations, needs, and opinions of significant others, while recognizing and expressing one's own needs and interests. To accomplish it, adolescents must resolve disagreements between their own and others' viewpoints through negotiation. Based on this notion, Sugimura (1996) reconceptualized the process of identity exploration as that of considering, making use of, and negotiating with others to make decisions about important life choices.

However, resolving disagreements through negotiation is not an easy task for adolescents especially in Japanese culture, because the assertion of different interests and opinions from others is viewed as destroying harmony. To examine how Japanese female late adolescents construct their sense of self in such relational contexts, the present study attempted to formulate the levels of relatedness in identity exploration.

Method

The participants were 33 Japanese female university third-year students aged 20 to 21. They were from the department of education and educational psychology at a national university in Japan, and from upper middle class families.

The Ego Identity Interview (Grotevant & Cooper, 1981) was expanded to include questions about relationships. The four domains of occupation, friendships, dating, and sex roles were chosen, because these were assumed to be important life areas among Japanese late adolescents.

The participants were interviewed individually. Each participant was assigned to a level of relatedness in identity exploration and to an identity status for each domain. The levels of relatedness in identity exploration were determined by using the constant comparative qualitative procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and by considering the levels of social cognitive development (e.g., Selman et al., 1986).

Results

Five levels of relatedness in identity exploration were formulated. Because there is no time to describe each level in detail, I will explain them just briefly. Level 1 is exploration without relatedness, in which individuals could not recognize their own and others' viewpoints. Level 5 is exploration with relatedness, in which individuals experienced disagreements between their own and others' viewpoints but have not resolved them yet. Between them, three levels were arranged.

Insert Table 1 about here

Table 1 shows the totals of each level of relatedness across four domains. The key result was a predominance of level 2 and 4. We focus on level 4 in this presentation, in which individuals recognize their own and others' viewpoints without disagreements.

Insert Table 2 about here

As can been seen in Table 2, most of the participants in level 4, in contrast to those in level 2, were rated as the higher identity status, i.e., Achievement or Moratorium. In other words, they could achieve the higher identity status without either disagreements or negotiation with significant others. The question, then, is how did these participants deal with their own and significant others' needs? We concentrated on the interview responses in the domains of occupation and sex roles, because adolescents' own interests and their parents' expectations were clearly observed in these domains.

Several ways in which these participants balanced between their own and parents' perspectives were found. When participants' interests and parents' expectations and values were different, many of the participants explored options of their interests, at the same time, to avoid conflicts with parents, they incorporated parents' expectations to some degree. That is, these adolescents made distinction between their real feelings and what they appeared to their parents. The following three examples are classified into this type.

Some participants did not express their parents what they really wanted to be and agreed with parents' expectations on the surface.

> Naturally, I'm concerned about my parents and have not mentioned that I am definitely eager to do creative work. So, rather than having differences of opinion, I'm concerned about my future, considering in advance the compromises that they and I might be able to make. So, I don't think we do directly confront each other. (Case 29, Occupation)

This woman, since before going to college, has been inclined to move out to a big city and do creative work. However, her parents have desired her to be a teacher in their hometown, and thus she is attending a local college and taking classes to become a certified teacher, following her parents' wishes. At present, she has been vacillating among working in the fields of mass-communication or film-making, or becoming a picture-book writer, and thus she has been vigorously consulting with others and inquiring about these occupations. She is planning to move out to a big city after graduation.

Other participants accepted their parents' values, despite that they questioned these values. For these participants, it was impossible to negotiate with parents because parents were not open to discussing value issues. These parents stuck to the sex role values of traditional Japanese culture.

> Raised in that way [that a man should work outside and a woman should keep house], even while lodging together with other members [during a club activities], I immediately put away [things] and do dishes [before male members do] . . . . (Have you had any differences of opinion between you and your parents when it comes to the sex roles?) All the time. [Even having an elder brother,] it's me who my mother had help with housekeeping . . . . I thought my brother should be burdened with half [of the housekeeping work], but my mother thought otherwise. She said I should do that because I was a girl . . . . (Have those discrepancies been solved somehow?) No, not solved yet . . . . Even if I disputed [with my father and brother,] at last, my mother and I do [housekeeping, and my father and brother refuse to do housekeeping], therefore, it's useless to dispute. (Case 31, Sex roles)

Furthermore, when the participants made different choices from their parents'

values, some of them tried to consider and understand parents' values to avoid conflicts with parents. For instance, one participant, unlike her mother who holds traditional sex role values, has the view of the equity of the sexes and wants to continue her career after marriage.

> My mother has an idea concerning me, that I should get married because I am a woman. . . . I didn't like that kind of idea when I was in junior and senior high schools, I really hated that way of thinking, just because one is a girl, [she should get married and stay at home], I used to say to my mother 'it's irrelevant'. But recently, I started to think that she has her own way of thinking, it might be another way of thinking. (Case 2, Sex roles)

Interestingly, several participants reported that, they did not incorporate their parents' wishes, but parents allowed their daughters to choose what they wanted to be despite that they did not approve them. That is, parents made distinction between their real feelings and what they appeared to their children. The following two examples are classified into this type.

> [Regarding my future, my parents] may have their desires in their minds, but they say, superficially, that I should do whatever I want to do. However, listening to their words carefully, I interpret they likewise consider [the job of counseling] unstable and uncertain . . . . Because it doesn't appear to be coercion [by my parents], I want to proceed with what I want to do. I feel sorry that I don't answer their expectations, however, I don't think it's good to meet their expectations at that point. (Case 8, Occupation)

> I am wondering if I should do welfare-related work using the knowledge I have

> learned at school, or work related to flowers because I have loved flowers since I was a kid . . . . My mother says that's fine, though . . . I feel she still wants me to become a certified teacher . . . . [She doesn't clearly imply to me that I should be a teacher, but] she thinks so behind . . . . [However,] I have decisively told my parents that I won't be a teacher because I am not interested in the field. (Case 12, Occupation)

These examples show that these female late adolescents manage to avoid conflicts with parents, while at that same time, they pursue their own interests.

Discussion

The results on the predominance of level 4 imply that these Japanese late adolescents tend to explore their identity without disagreements. Several studies found that Japanese, in contrast to Westerners, are likely to avoid antagonism and negotiation between themselves and others before they occur (Flammer et al., 1995; The National Language Research Institute, 1984). Thus, Japanese adolescents may attempt to integrate their own and others' viewpoints without conflicts with significant others. In Japanese culture, this is not experienced as giving up the self but rather as formulating a sense of self in harmony with others.

Japanese females especially tend to show such characteristics more clearly than males do. In fact, Moriya (1997) found that Japanese women as compared to men tend to resolve conflicts with others by adapting themselves to the others' opinions rather than by resolving the problem itself. Although females as well as males are encouraged to assert their needs and opinions in contemporary Japanese society, the traditional expectations for females remains strong; that is, females should obey to and cooperate with others to maintain good relationships.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Furthermore, the present study provided several ways in which adolescents balance between their own needs and parents' expectations. Some parents also avoid conflicts with their children and try to adapt themselves to their children's interests. These results imply that Japanese parents and children may attempt to keep family relationships more harmonious than Westerners do. As Raeff (1997) suggested, there are various ways in which individuality and connectedness are expressed in different cultural contexts. In Western culture, negotiating with others is viewed as an expression of independent self, and at the same time, as one useful way of relating to others. In Japanese culture, on the other hand, adapting to others' expectations and avoiding negotiation with others are the typical styles of relationships, and at the same time, these activities are viewed as an expression of a mature self.

In conclusion, Japanese female late adolescents do work on identity issues, and thus the Western concept and approaches to identity formation can generally apply to them. However, the process of identity exploration among Japanese female late adolescents, in particular the process of balancing between their own and others' perspectives, is different from that of Western adolescents. The present study provided some empirical evidences on how they construct their sense of self in relational contexts. Further studies comparing Japanese with Western adolescents are needed on the identity exploration process, which will help to construct a theory of identity development from a viewpoint of relatedness.

References

Flammer, A., Ito, T., Luthi, R., Plaschy, N., Reber, R. Zurbriggen, L., & Sugimine, H. (1995). Coping with control-failure in Japanese and Swiss adolescents. Swiss Journal of Psychology, 54, 277-288.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research. Chicago: Aldine.

Grotevant, H. D., & Cooper, C. R. (1981). Assessing adolescent identity in the areas of occupation, religion, politics, friendships, dating and sex roles: Manual for administration and coding of the interview. JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology, 11, 52 (ms. no. 2295).

Moriya, K. (1997). Self-regulation of negative feelings in every day context: A study based on the analysis of life-recollections. Ritsumeikan Educational Studies, 11, 7-23.

Raeff, C. (1997). Individuals in relationships: Cultural values, children's social interactions, and the development of an American individualistic self. Developmental Review, 17, 205-238.

Selman, R. L., Beardslee, W., Schultz, L. H., Krupa, M., & Podorefsky, D. (1986). Assessing adolescent interpersonal negotiation strategies: Toward the integration of structural and functional models. Developmental Psychology, 22, 450-459.

Shweder, R. A., Goodnow, J., Hatano, G., LeVine, R. A., Markus, H., & Miller, P. (1998). The cultural psychology of development: One mind, many mentalities. In W. Damon (Series Ed.) & R. M. Lerner (Vol. Ed.), Handbook of child psychology: Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development (5th ed., pp. 865-937). New York: Wiley.

Sugimura K. (1996, August). Reconceptualization of identity exploration by relatedness. Poster presented at the 14th Biennial Meetings of the International Society for the Study of Behavioural Development, Quebec City, Canada.

The National Language Research Institute. (1984). A contrastive study of Japanese and German linguistic behaviour (Annual Report of the National Language Research Institute No. 80). Tokyo: Sanseido.

Table 1 Totals of each level of relatedness across four domains

Level of relatedness	Total across four domains
Level 1	5
Level 2	64
Level 3	12
Level 4	42
Level 5	9

Table 2 Totals of each level of relatedness for identity status across four domains

Level of relatedness	Identity status	
	Diffusion/ Foreclosure	Moratorium/ Achievement
Level 1	5	0
Level 2	**62**	2
Level 3	12	0
Level 4	5	**37**
Level 5	0	9